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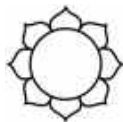
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PART ONE: THE DŌJŌ 道場

Essentially, The Dōjō is where the heart is. Where one trains is irrelevant and only is an abstract concept, i.e., not true reality. One trains wherever and whenever one can. One does not need expensive paraphernalia or machines to become strong; it is truly a matter of one's volition. Of course being in a dōjō is beneficial for most, especially for a number of years, but once one has trained for many years under a master or superior teacher, one can use their wazas (techniques) or training methods at one's home.

Having said that, when one is in a dōjō, especially a Honbu Dōjō (headquarters school), one can learn a great deal ostensibly. Besides a wonderful master (Shihan) or Senior Instructor (Sensei) presiding, one can also learn a great deal from the Uchideshis (live-in disciples) as well. Plus, being around other Kōhais or deshis (fellow students/disciples), one can share the experience (dharma) with others, which is truly wonderful and demonstrates Universality and Interconnectedness.

This is manifested by everyone working together by yet, individually. In other words, albeit that one is there with other sharing the dharma, one is also their by oneself, because everyone's perception is unique or different; not better or worse than, since that is comparison involving ego or self-attachment, and thus, not reality or Karatedo, it is rather just different or individualistic, and that is what makes each one their own person. Perception is something that can be presumed the same from one to another, but that is abstract reality and thus, only comprehended by the logical and or non-reality; but as Buddhists and Karatekas demonstrating Bushido, which is based/from Buddhism, one's perception of reality is always one's own and never someone else's.

No two people can look at the same thing exactly in the same way; one sees something with one's own eyes, or from one's own perspective, and with one's own thoughts or perception, which cannot be the same to another person's.

So, when in a dōjō, one shares the dharma, but in each one's own way, which makes it unique and special. Moreover, a dōjō is where one forgets one's troubles or daily mundane living. One checks one's ego at the door and is Shikan or just doing. One sweats and purges one's toxins of one's day, which is one's ego, petty grievances, jealousy, anger, sadness, insecurity, etc.; so, one just comes in and gets lost in the moment and is Zen.

And a true Sensei or Shihan will perpetuate this without saying anything except when it is needed to be said. Most often, the instructor acts by leading by example and setting a pace and mandating, per se, the protocols of the Dōjō. So, when one drifts off or when the group is lacking in focus, the instructor gets that back on track to their karatedo. That is the true mark of a true teacher and a true Dōjō of Karatedo.

Too many so-called dōjōs have inexperienced instructors of people who have purchased their obis (belts) and ranks. They spend thousands of dollars and created or perpetuate a facade of accomplishments to buttress their position within the so-called dōjō. This is quite sad and preposterous to say the least. It is offensive, per se or truly mocks the Organization, the school and undermines the entire entity as a style.

Gakuseis (students) or deshis (disciples) have to be taught by only qualified or true teachers; i.e., instructors that have fought in competitively knockdown competitions that

challenged them physically and mentally. True teachers have to learn what truly works or is effective in a knockdown competition, so that they can experience and thus, know what it is they are telling others who pay hard-earned money to learn. For one to expound on kumite Waza (fighting techniques) without experience is a charlatan at the very least and is a thief, because they are stealing money from students who come in to actually learn from someone who has supposedly “been there and done that,” so to speak.

And when a dōjō possess such an instructor the schools and its students are all the more better; i.e., the integrity of the school is clear and truthful. And this attracts more people who truly want to practice a martial art. However, and sadly, some people like to join an academy, per se and say or boast of their art and rank, without being at all serious. But that is not Karatedo, and if more schools were truly about the art, then these types of so-called schools or money academies would not exist in great numbers and any true karatekas would never step foot into one as well.

Having been in two Honbu Dōjōs, one under Kyokushinkai Kan Karate (my heritage) and one under World Oyama Karate (my successive one, in which I became an Uchideshi), both under the great Soshu Shigeru Oyama or Sosai Mas Oyama’s protege, I learned what a real Dōjō is like. How people treat one another and how to carry oneself, because of the Great Soshu Oyama and his Gakuseis and deshis!

Suffice it to say, we never had ego; it was checked at the entrance and by the LOUD vociferous “OSUs” that bellowed throughout upon one entering. And by Uchideshis of his as well as higher ranks or Sempais. We all came in and just sweated; we all got lost in ourselves in the classes. We got hit constantly with the Shinai (some more than others as was my case), and trained very hard, and fought hard as well; then we would all have dinners together and eat and laugh and hold no grudges; if there ever was a small one brewing Soshu took care of it, instantly. There were never any true fights amongst the Gakuseis. Of course as time went on or more aptly put, once the 90s came, politics crept in and clichés were formed sadly. To which I had no part of, having it been instilled that karatedo is lacking of that.

I learned that one trains hard with one’s brothers and sisters and that is it! One pushes oneself and when one doesn’t, then one’s brothers or sisters would give the appropriate kick in the butt to get one out of whatever one’s dilemma (stagnant mind) that one manifested. We all had each other’s back and never let one waiver to a woeful place in one’s abstract mind (non-reality). We truly demonstrated Universality and an Interconnectedness every moment.

And this is something that I instill into my Gakuseis, regardless of starting and having a small organization. That is moot, what is not, is how we treat one another and other visiting deshis from other styles, and also how we train, which is without ego. We always remain humble and venerable, and I am always humbled and honored by my Gakuseis; needless to say, I am also blessed and thankful for their attentiveness, discipline, veracity, respect, and benevolence demonstrated.

And when I wasn’t partaking within a dōjō, I trained at home; that is why the Dōjō is where the heart is or where one makes it. One only needs discipline and simple exercises, such as the Core ones, e.g., squats, push-ups, pull-ups, calve raises, hyperextensions, plyo-jumps, Makiwara (for Sekien and Sune and Chūsoku), as well as practicing all one’s Geris/Keris (kicks) and Tsukis (punches). Having some dumbbells are nice, but not necessary. Nor is a heavy bag or machines. Self-made sandbags for Makiwara is more than sufficient. One can also use stairs

as well as the sidewalks/streets/roads for running, sprints or both. This is Karatedo of a Karatekas! It is truly what one makes of it or how one manifests it!



PART TWO: OSU 押忍

In a dōjō, the term “OSU” is used; it is a made-up Japanese (Nihongo Ga) word. It has “o” as the prefix, per se, and that means “push” and the “su” is the suffix, per se, which means to “endure”; so, combined it means many things, such as “I understand,” or “I will try harder,” or “I will make the effort,” or “I will persevere”; i.e., one will try one’s hardest and persevere to do one’s best.

But it is more commonly known as “Patience, Respect, and Appreciation. Karatekas also use it as “Hai” or “Yes” or “Okay,” etc., i.e., it has many different applications, but it’s understood (wakarimusa) as all of the aforementioned.

This is a part of the mental training. To remind oneself that you are constantly in a state of learning and that is transcended as Zen and OSU! As is standing in Yoi Dachi or ready stance while one listens to one’s instructor (Sensei/Shihan). One always desires to stay mentally sharp/awake, i.e., in the moment as one does when practicing Zazen or Mokuso (meditating).

Osu is also a way to greet fellow students (Kōhais) or disciples (deshis) or any higher rank, such as a Sempai/Senpai, or Sensei, Shihan, Kaicho, Kancho, Soshu, or Sosai. One also sends someone off or says goodbye with “OSU” as well! It is truly a universal word, which is great, because it encompasses the Ensō or No Beginning, No End aspect of Buddhism, Bushido and of course then Karatedo.

The power of this word is immense especially by true Karatekas. It has a different sound to it, due to its meaning to that very individual saying it. It can touch one’s soul or spirit and can also charge one emotionally as well, depending on who and how it is being said or used. But the more imperative aspect of the word is what it represents. It humbles each one of us as Karatekas of Karatedo. It reminds us that we are one, albeit, that we are individual. It reminds us that we are all Interconnected and share Universality. It is the Ensō or the Om as well.

It is not a pious word or use of diction, rather, it is akin to the Buddha in one’s altars or the Mālās or the Dōgi that one wears; i.e., it is a symbolical representation of one’s practice and nothing more. That is the power of the word and the correlation to Buddhism and Bushido. It represents oneself and reminds one to look inwardly always over looking outwardly for answers or guidance. One is the key to one’s happiness or recognizing one’s True Nature or Original Face. And via Zazen (meditation) and practice of it and Karatedo, one again sees one’s Original Face.

That is the power of Buddhism, Karatedo and the usage of the word “OSU.” One who has the acquire great balance of Middle Way, has the most vociferous “OSU” upon entering or greeting. It is vibrant and cascades within the dōjō or abounds throughout everything and everyone. It is the spirit of Karatedo in a dōjō.

“OSU” is powerful, venerable and humbling. It demonstrates a spirit that is imperturbable, balanced, at peace, and benevolent. It reflects how one feels about oneself as well as how one feels about others too. It is the word of Universality/Interconnectedness for the Karatekas of Karatedo. It has No Beginning, No End. It is not biased and lacks Discriminatory Mind, or Comparison, i.e., ego or self-attachment. It is the Middle Way and Karatedo: OSU!

リベラ 道場

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